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Regular and Irregular Migration in Times of Global Economic Crisis: Perceptions and Realities

Mariya Aleksynska

Background Methodological Report
within the framework of the comparative project
"Irregular Migration in Times of Global Economic Crisis – Perceptions and Realities in Europe, Africa, Latin-America and Asia"

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1. Introduction

According to the World Bank estimates, about 180 million people, or three percent of the world's population, are living in countries other than their countries of birth. Immigrants have been contributing to the economic growth and prosperity of the destination countries, as well as to the development of their origin countries, shaping their economies, societies, and cultures.

With the outburst of the economic crisis, its implications for migration size and direction, for the composition of migrant flows and stocks, for issues of migration management and regulation, as well as attitudes of native-born individuals towards immigrants, have become high on media on political agenda. The aim of this report is to offer an overview of current and past migration situation, as well as opinions about immigration, as to reconcile perceptions with realities, and to identify key concerns and directions for further research.

2. Economic Setting and Migration Trends Prior to the Crisis

In order to understand what has been happening with migration flows and stocks during the economic crisis, one needs to understand the migration situation prior to it.

Figure 1 shows migration trends in a selection of the OECD countries in the past 50 years. While the stocks of immigrants have been relatively stable over the first half of the period, most of the countries witnessed an increase in migration stocks in the last twenty years. Countries such as Spain, Italy, or Greece, have become classic examples of countries of an unprecedented rapid switch from emigration to immigration states.[1]

Immigrants have contributed significantly to the growth and well-being of receiving economies. They have been the ones most swiftly responding to the labor needs in the sectors booming prior to the crisis, such as construction, tourism, restaurant business, or manufacturing (sectors, that eventually have been affected the most by the crisis). They have also responded to more structural needs of economies that have lacked own labor due to demographic and educational profile of native-born populations, notably filling up jobs in domestic services and health care (OECD, 2009). Last but not least, immigrants have also allowed an increased participation in the labor market of native-born females. Table 1 shows an annual contribution of immigration to the annual economic growth in a selection of the OECD countries, in the last decade prior to the crisis. In countries such as Spain or Italy, as much as half of the economic growth between 1995 and 2005 can be entirely attributed to first-generation immigrants. This contribution has been non-negligible in all receiving

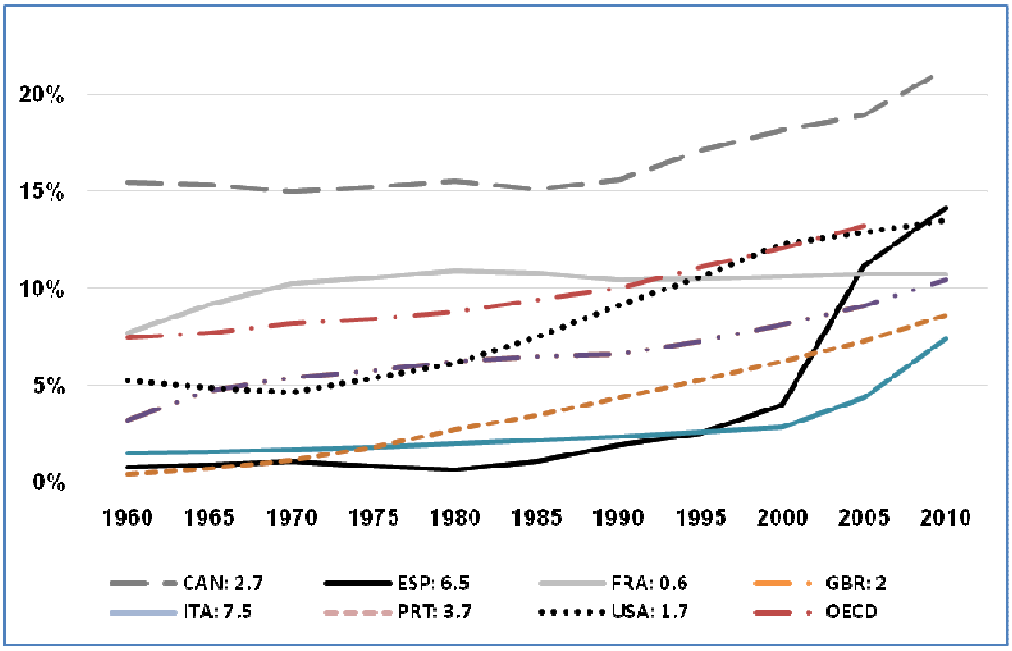
[1] While most of this report will focus on migration trends in the OECD countries, it is also important to remember that most of the world's international immigrants move between developing or between developed countries (UNDP, 2009).

countries, even without taking into account the impact of immigration beyond the life-time span of a particular immigrant.

Immigrants to the OECD have been incredibly diverse, from the point of view of their countries of origin and cultures they brought it, but also from the point of view of their socio-economic characteristics. Table 2 shows a significant variability of immigrants' distribution across age and education categories, both across and within destination countries. For example, in 2005, while in Belgium the group of young skilled immigrants represented only 3 percent of young skilled native-born, this indicator was as high as 27 percent in Germany. Within countries variation was also large. For instance, in the USA, the share of skilled immigrants in young and old age groups was the same and equaled 12 percent of skilled natives in the same age groups. At the same time, unskilled migrants of the main working age group represented as much as 30 percent of the similar native-born population. In numerous countries, immigrants tend to be overrepresented among unskilled workers of main age groups. This is especially the case of new immigration countries, although one can observe significant number of all types of immigrant workers in these countries, too.

The differences in these characteristics allowed immigrants to be complement, and not only substitute, to native-born individuals in the labor markets, adressing the needs of booming, and ageing, economies. It is precisely these differences, too, coupled with differences in rights and degree of labor market protection that made immigrants particularly vulnerable at the times of the economic crisis.

Figure 1. Stocks of International Migrants as Percentage of Total Population



Source: UN Global Migration Database; and UN International Migration Wallchart, 2009. Note: Next to countries names reported are average annual rates of change in migrant stocks in the time span of 2005-2010.Data for 2010: based on projections.

Table 1. Yearly contribution of immigrants to real growth of GDP per capita, 1995-2005

Country	Yearly growth of real GDP per capita	Yearly growth of the share of immigrants over natives	Yearly growth of real GDP per capita due to immigrants
Spain	2.74%	17.05%	1.79%
Italy	1.20%	5.49%	0.58%
Austria	2.00%	6.13%	0.64%
Denmark	1.70%	4.38%	0.46%
Iceland	3.53%	7.52%	0.79%
Portugal	1.76%	3.51%	0.37%
Greece	3.32%	5.86%	0.62%
Norway	2.27%	3.69%	0.39%
Finland	3.30%	4.12%	0.43%
Ireland	6.22%	7.60%	0.80%
Switzerland	1.05%	1.10%	0.12%
United Kingdom	2.47%	2.42%	0.25%
USA	2.31%	2.24%	0.23%
Germany	1.19%	1.10%	0.12%
Sweden	2.56%	2.12%	0.22%
Netherlands	1.85%	1.26%	0.13%
Canada	2.50%	1.26%	0.13%
Luxembourg	3.76%	1.75%	0.18%
France	1.87%	0.25%	0.03%
Australia	2.30%	-1.38%	-0.14%
New Zealand	2.23%	-2.72%	-0.29%
Belgium	1.80%	-2.80%	-0.29%

Source: Author's calculations. For more details, see Aleksynska and Tritah (2009).

Over the past decades, as the regular migration flows have been increasing, the notion of irregular migration has become pertinent, too. Governments have been preoccupied by irregular movements and irregular stay for the reasons of security, equity of treatment, potential social consequences, and more broadly, of the challenge of having a control over these processes.

By definition, irregular migration is a phenomenon that has appeared when rules and restrictions on the movement of people started to be set. While modern immigration to core European countries has started after the Second World War, and was initially happening within relatively welcoming guest programs, the reversal of migration policies started taking place after the first oil shock. Ever since, tightening of migration policies has been on the rise. This included tightening of visa regimes, setting up quotas and selection criteria for admissions of specific types of migrants, regulating the stay and its prolongation, defining and tightening of border controls as well as internal inspections, to name a few.

Table 4 shows the strictness of immigration policy vis-à-vis economic migrants in twelve European countries in the period of 1994-2005, along six different dimensions: the number of certificates and procedures needed to be admitted as a foreigner, whatever the motivations may be; the number of certification or procedures required to legally reside in the territory; the number of years required to obtain a permanent residence permit; the number of administrations involved; the number of years of stay required to obtain a first residence permit; the existence of a quota system. In addition, it also includes the index of strictness of asylum legislation, developed by Hatton (2004). All indices are scaled from 0 to 6, with higher scores representing stricter regulation. This table shows a significant variation of procedures and policies among European countries. Even within each country, one may see relatively tight aspect of some policies (such as the number of residence requirements in Denmark) and relatively lax aspect of others (such as admission requirements in the same country).

Table 2. Ratios of Immigrants over Native-born by Age and Education Categories, in a Selection of Countries, 2005

Age-skill category	BEL	DNK	ESP	FRA	GBR	GER	GRC	IRL	ITA	NLD	PRT	USA
15-24 Unskilled	0.08	0.09	0.10	0.06	0.13	0.20	0.10	0.07	0.04	0.12	0.07	0.15
25-54 Unskilled	0.18	0.09	0.13	0.16	0.14	0.26	0.10	0.09	0.07	0.18	0.08	0.30
55-64 Unskilled	0.14	0.03	0.03	0.18	0.09	0.24	0.03	0.04	0.02	0.10	0.02	0.19
15-24 Skilled	0.03	0.06	0.04	0.05	0.14	0.27	0.05	0.11	0.03	0.08	0.11	0.12
25-54 Skilled	0.16	0.11	0.13	0.13	0.14	0.18	0.08	0.20	0.06	0.13	0.16	0.17
55-64 Skilled	0.09	0.08	0.08	0.16	0.11	0.22	0.10	0.12	0.04	0.11	0.09	0.12

Source: Author's calculations from Census and Labor Force Surveys Data. For more details, see Aleksynska and Tritah, 2009.

Tightening of these policies has meant that even for those who enter a country legally, in order to obtain or extend residence and work permits, numerous procedures have been created, some of them specifically aimed at discouraging migrants. Many of these procedures, rather than preventing new entry or facilitating the exit, have pushed existing immigrants into illegality. More importantly, the lack of legal possibilities for migrating, coupled with political, economic, and demographic pressures in the countries of origin, stimulated both irregular entry and overstaying of legal entry arrangements (Clandestino, Pathways into Irregularity Report; 2009).

As irregular immigrants most often than not do not appear in official records, it is extremely difficult to assess their true number. The lack of the consistent precise information on the true number of irregular immigrants can potentially be viewed as one of the reasons for the success of media and political discourse in picturing a grave image of the current situation.

Among significant comprehensive efforts undertaken to obtain comparable structured estimates of irregular migrants has been the Clandestino project, which assembled a database of estimated irregular migration in the years 2002, 2005, and 2008 in a number of European countries and neighboring transit countries. This research shows that, on the eve of the crisis, circa 2008, the stock of irregular resident population in the EU-15, defined as "foreign nationals without any legal residence status in the country they are residing and persons violating the terms of their status so that their stay may be terminated, which basically concerns the "irregularly working tourists" from third countries" was at maximum around 0.77% of the total population, or about 13% of all immigrant population (Clandestino, Size and Development Report; 2009). The number of irregular immigrants has actually witnessed a decline as compared to 2002, when an estimated 1.4% of the total population of EU-15 countries, or 25% of all immigrants, has been irregular. This drop in the number of irregular immigrants is mostly due to large regularization programs, administered notably by Italy, Spain, and Greece, as well as to the expansion of the EU and allowing for free movement of citizens from new member States, some of whom were classified as irregular prior to the accession. This also emphasizes the fact that the "victory" in "fighting" the irregular migration can not so much be attributed to the success of certain policies, but rather to the redefining of what constitutes regularity of movement and stay, and that as such it is rather temporary in nature.

Table 4. Strictness of Immigration Policy in 12 European Countries (1994-2005)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Country	**# Admission requirements**	**# Residence requirements**	**# Years to obtain permanent residence**	**# Administrations involved**	**Years of stay required to obtain a first residence permit**	**Existence of a quota system**	**Strictness of asylum legislation**	**Overall index**
Austria	0	4.5	1	4	2	4	4	2.8
Denmark	0	6	2	4	4	2	4.5	3.2
Finland	4	3	1	2	4	2	3.5	2.8
France	0	0	1	2	2	2	3.5	1.5
Germany	0	6	1	2	2	2	5	2.6
Greece	0	3	4	4	2	2	4	2.7
Ireland	2	4.5	4	4	2	2	2	2.9
Italy	4	4.5	2	2	2	4	3.5	3.1
Netherlands	4	1.5	1	4	4	2	4.5	3
Portugal	4	3	3	2	2	4	3.5	3.1
Spain	6	1.5	1	4	2	4	4	3.2
UK	2	1.5	4	4	2	2	4.9	2.9

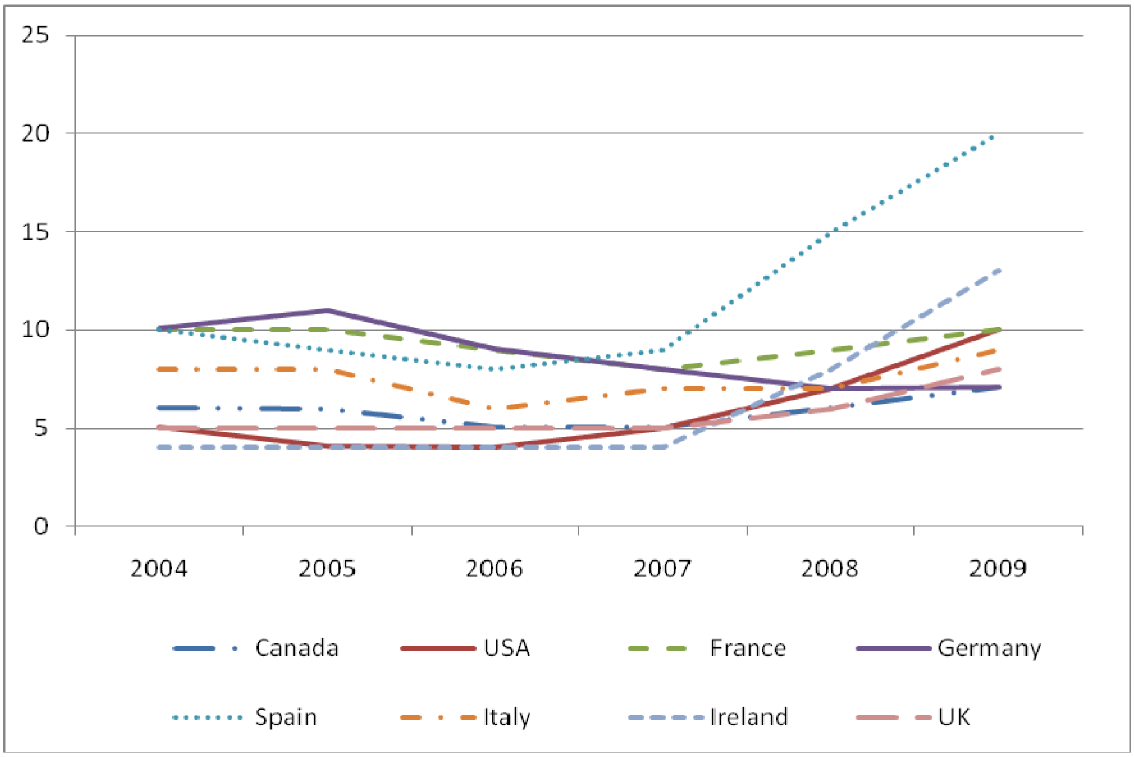
Source: Boeri and Fumagalli (2009). Inventory of migration policies, 1990-2005. FRDB. Available at: www.frdb.org

In addition, the data on apprehensions and rejections at the borders have been assembled systematically by the ICMPD (see the Yearbooks on Irregular migration, various years), which since recently are collected in partnership with Frontex and Eurostat. These data are of extreme importance, although they only reflects the real apprehensions, but not the full irregular flows, and neither the potential migration pressure. Also, these data represent what is known as the physical, or geographical inflows and outflows of irregular immigrants, but not the flows due to the change of the status. According to them, amid the spike of irregular apprehensions in Canary Islands in 2006, in the last decade, the total annual number of apprehensions has been relatively stable, and even declining on the sea border with Spain, or on the land border with Eastern European countries by 2007-2008.

4. Migration Trends at Times of the Global Economic Crisis

The global economic crisis resulted in a major recession in numerous origin and destination countries, causing, among other, large unemployment in many sectors of economic activity. Figure 2 shows the rise of unemployment in a selection of OECD countries, showing the example of countries such as Ireland, where the unemployment level has more than tripled between December 2007 and December 2009, or of Spain, where it has reached unprecedented level of 20% in December 2009.

Figure 2. Rates of Unemployment in Selected Countries, December each year



Source: ILO LABORSTA. Note: Last data point for the UK corresponds to October 2009.

The impact of the crisis on both regular and irregular migration can be analyzed across various dimensions:

- economic versus other types of immigrants,
- immigrants by sector of economic activity,
- immigrants by type of destination and origin country,
- short-term versus long-term immigrants,
- flows versus stocks

To start with, the immediate effect of the economic crisis has been predominantly on economic, or labor, migration. In fact, immigrants are the part of population that has been most vulnerable to the rise of unemployment because of the sectors they work in, the logic of their firing ("first in, first out"), the policies favoring the employment of nationals put in place, as well as because of their individual socio-economic characteristics, such as being young, lacking seniority and qualifications (Khoudour-Castéras, 2009). For example, in Ireland, while in the fourth quarter of 2008, the unemployment rate of native-born stood at 7.4%, that of immigrants was 9.5%. In Spain, the occurrence of unemployment has been 3,5% higher among immigrants than among native-born in the same period (Awad, 2009).

Other types of migration, such as for instance asylum-seeking, are expected to be less affected by the crisis, as they are mostly driven by non- economic factors. However, in the medium run, they can also be subject to significant changes as a matter of substitution: lower possibilities to migrate through the labor channel increase the number of applicants through other channels. Indeed, in France, for example, there was an increase of 20,6% in the number of applicants seeking asylum in 2009, as compared to 2008, and a slight increase in the number of entries of foreign students, while a drop in the entries for economic motifs was observed (French Office of Immigration and Integration). As to family reunification, it has also declined by 7,8% over the year 2009, presumably because family members at destination are not able to provide sufficient resources to support their families, and hence prefer postponing bringing in their families.

The sectors of economic activity in which immigrants have been employed is key in assessing the impact of the crisis. Immigrants in those sectors where shortages were observed during the times of economic growth, such as, notably, construction or tourism, during the crisis have also been the ones affected the most (Awad, 2009). Once again, this has been particularly true for Spain and Ireland, and also for the US. In other countries, notably Malaysia, Japan, and the Republic of Korea, downsizing in manufacturing has particularly hurt immigrants(ibid).

In addition to this, there are certain sectors, such as agriculture in Spain, where immigrants have been substituting native-born (Khoudour-Castéras, 2009). As unemployment rose in Spain, many native-born have returned to these sectors, unpopular before the crisis, thus further pushing immigrants out of the jobs.

In contrast, other sectors, such as domestic services or health care, which have had a more permanent demand for immigrants, were less affected by the crisis. In fact, some of these sectors have even witnessed a growth in employment, such as health care or education in the US and Ireland (ILO, 2009). These sectors, where the demand for immigrants is more structural, and is determined by the long-term demographic and education patterns of native-born individuals, rather than by the periods of economic growth and down-turns, will continue needing immigrant workers regarding the crisis.

It is also important to remember that not all countries have been affected in the same way by the economic crisis (ibid): some of them have witnessed a slowdown of a lesser degree, others have witnessed it with a time lag. Thus, there have been different consequences in terms of the scale and the timing of unemployment, and its impact on immigrants. In countries of former Soviet Union, considerable return of migrant workers from Russia to other republics has been observed. Immigrants in several Asian counties, particularly Malaysia, the Republic of Korea, Thailand, Singapore, have been particularly affected by the crisis (and again, mostly in manufacturing and other low-skilled sectors), but not in the Gulf countries, such as Oman and Kuwait, where the situation has been relatively stable (Awad, 2009).

The impact of the economic crisis on return of immigrants, and hence on the reduction of stocks, has proven to depend largely on a type of prior migration intentions, and had different consequences for permanent settlers with long-term residence status, versus short-term newcomers and circular migrants. It also had a differentiated impact on potential candidates to migration.

The long-term settlers, regardless of the unemployment, are relatively unlikely to change in their quantity and return to the countries of origin because of the crisis. The reason for this is that, even if immigrants are the most vulnerable types of workers, they may prefer to stay in the destination country and weather the crisis (potentially also receiving social benefits), rather than return to their countries of origin where employment prospects are even more slim. In addition, for long-term settlers, moving back is costly, as they have established long-term networks at the destination, and brought over their families. Further, because of the high barriers to migration, there may be little possibility to re-enter destination countries after the crisis. A good example of a country with a long history of migration and a majority of long-term migrants is France, which has observed only a 5% drop in regulated labor migration in the first three quarters of 2009 as opposed to the same time span in 2008 (OECD, 2010).

Rather than returning, these long-term economic immigrants from third countries may risk sliding into irregularity. The scale of this process will to a large degree depend on the persistence of unemployment, as well as on the policies of the hosting countries, such as the easiness of losing a work permit when the job is lost, or the legal time allowed staying without a job. Potential challenges here include also irregular employment, employment in informal sector, as well as employment in precarious conditions for the sake of survival at destination.

As to the short-term immigrants, they have a higher propensity of losing a job as compared to long-term stayers, mostly because they lack country-specific knowledge and power to stay in occupied positions or to quickly find new employment. Their return, however, depends largely on the possibility to move freely (for example, immigrants to the EU-15 countries from new member States). In the absence of barriers to move, immigrants from the new member States can easily move back to their countries, and live on their savings in a setting where the cost of living is relatively low, and move again once new opportunities for work appear. In contrast, the move back home is particularly difficult for immigrants without a possibility of free reentry, because successful re-immigration after the crisis is very uncertain. In fact, most recent statistics point to the fact that immigrants from new European member states, such as Poles in the UK, have been quick to respond to the crisis and left back to Poland. In the UK, a 25% drop in immigration from other European countries between 2007 and 2008, and a 40% drop in 2009 has been observed (ibid). While immigration from the 'A8' accession countries of the European Union has fallen, the long-term immigration to the UK remained stable, and stood at 518,000 in the year to June 2009 compared to 531,000 in the year to June 2008 (UK Border Agency, 2010). Similarly, in Spain, a 25% drop in immigration from other European countries between 2007 and 2008 has been witnessed. In contrast, only a 6% drop in immigration from other origins in Spain has been recorded over the same period. Comparably, according to the National Statistics, Geography, and Information Institute, there has been little change in the number of return Mexican migrants from the US between 2007 and 2008, while the number of Mexican new incomers has halved over the same period.

All in all, the impact of the economic crisis on the immigrant stocks depends on numerous determinants and differs across countries and sectors of economic activity. In the same country, pronounced unemployment of immigrants in one sector may be observed alongside a stable, or even increasing, employment rate in other sectors. In general, no massive return of workers to developing countries has been observed so far (Awad, 2009). The freedom of movement and the strictness of migration policies play a key role in sizing migration inflows and outflows, and thus in the resulting stocks.

Among the new candidates to immigration, a priori, the quantity of inflows may go in both directions. On the one hand, if the entry is supply driven, more immigrants may attempt to enter if the conditions in their countries push them to do so. On the other hand, if the entry is demand-driven, and labor market conditions at destinations deteriorate, we may observe the decrease in the number of entries.

In fact, the latest data rather suggest that it is mostly the conditions in receiving countries, rather than in sending countries, that determine the inflows of immigrants, both regular and irregular, and that while no mass return of immigrants has taken place, the inflows of new immigrants have significantly slowed down (Awad and Alsvik, 2009). For instance, in the

UK, applications from eastern Europeans to work in the UK under the Worker Registration Scheme fell to 28,495 in the last quarter of 2009, compared to 30,600 in the same period in 2008, and 52,765 in the last quarter of 2007 (UK Border Agency, 2010). The total number of apprehensions and forced return, as well as voluntary departures from the UK has decreased slightly from 67,980 in 2008 to 64,750 in 2009 (ibid).

Reduction of economic opportunities for both regular and irregular immigrants at destination has been the major factor of immigration slowdown. In fact, the economic situation in receiving, not in origin countries, plays a significantly more important role in migration decisions, especially for economic migrants (Frontex, 2009). A certain paradox in immigration during the crisis has been observed: migration is a durable and volatile phenomenon at the same time, and volatility is mostly driven by the business cycles of receiving nations. As a matter of fact, according to Gallup report (Gravelle et al, 2010), the economic situation in origin countries is not a significant determinant of migration intentions at all, as opposed to concerns of home-country political stability, human rights, confidence in national leadership, local institutions, corruption in business and government, and family and friendship ties, all of which have been found to be important determinants of migration intensions.

5. How can the Crisis Affect the Number of Irregular Immigrants?

The change in the number of irregular immigrants during and after the crisis depends on several indicators, such as:

- the number of irregular immigrants existing prior to the crisis,
- the falling into irregularity of regular migrants affected by the crisis, especially by unemployment,
- the expansion of informal sector in destination countries,
- the entry of new irregular immigrants ,
- the effect of apprehension and readmission efforts versus regularization policies,

As the majority of immigrants from developing countries prefer not to return to their origin countries, the chances of sliding into irregularity because of the crisis may be particularly high. They will increase among immigrants who lose their jobs, if the policies of destination countries are such that immigrants lose the right to stay or the right to be reemployed with another employer. Thus, the number of irregular immigrants will depend not only on the general labor market conditions and unemployment, but also on country-specific policies of renewal of permits of stay and residency cards.

The degree of informality of destination economies also plays a role: irregular immigrants are less costly to the employers and thus may be preferred to the native-born. Being attracted by this logic, some migrants may prefer to stay, and new irregular migrants may flow in, despite the precarity and uncertainty of this kind of employment.

Among the new potential irregular migrants, many candidates to economic migration, including those who would attempt an irregular entry are likely to postpone their move due to worse economic situation both at home and at destination. This is because for economic migrants migration represents an investment decision. As irregular migration is very costly (De Haas, 2007), the economic slowdown reduces the availability of resources to finance the long and uncertain trip. The slim prospects of finding employment at destination also mean that repayment of these costs will not be easy, and new expenses, associated with living in a high-income country will be mounting. Finally, as many migrants at destination have been affected, financial support from within migration networks is also less likely.

The data on apprehensions of irregular migrants crossing the border of the EU shows a significant decrease in apprehensions on the land border. However, there has been a slight increase in the sea-border apprehensions (Frontex, 2009). This is mainly due to the time-lag issue, as sea-border crossings happen in multiple stages and the response of long-distance sea-travelling immigrants to changing conditions at the final destination is not as swift as of the land-travelling immigrants. Many of the former have been located at various hubs and awaiting for an opportunity to make a final move. Thus, for example, the reported sea-border apprehensions, as well as highly mediatized boat arrivals in 2009 and even 2010 are not the new waves of immigrants, but rather the remainders of the previous waves that have started in origin countries before or just at the time of the crisis.

Frontex also collects the data on the apprehensions of irregular immigrants who attempt to exit the EU. The numbers of such apprehensions has been slightly on the rise, suggesting that either irregular immigrants cannot find job opportunities following the crisis and return back home, or some of the regular migrants, having fallen into irregularity because of unemployment, prefer to move back. However, no real policies exist to date to "forgive" this type of irregularity or facilitate exit, while the crisis may be a good opportunity to actually develop such policies. For this reason, returning back home, for many irregular immigrants is not really an option.

Overall, over the past two years, illegal migration flows have significantly decreased, while illegal stocks may be on the rise. Those immigrants who become irregular at destination because of the loss of jobs, may also be afraid to cross border on the way back home and be apprehended without proper documents. In a certain way, Europeans are taken hostage by their own policies: by raising border controls and anti-immigration policies, which might have worked to reduce the flows, they now may witness the increase of stocks of irregular immigrants.

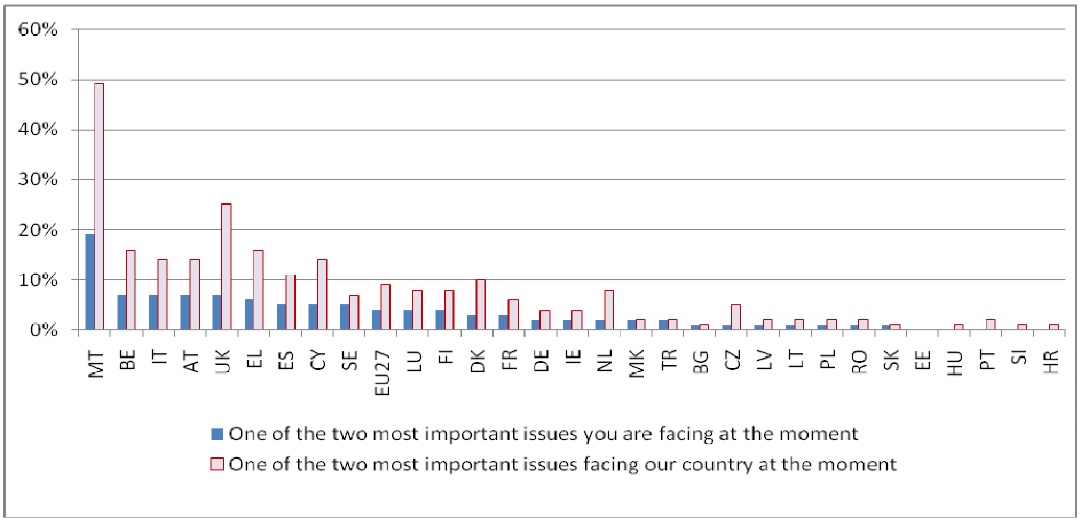
6. Attitudes towards Immigrants in Destination Countries: Have They Changed?

According to Dustmann and Preston (2007), attitudes towards immigrants in general are predominantly driven by racial sentiments, which are strongly associated with hostility to immigration mainly from ethnically distinct populations. At the same time, welfare and labor market concerns are related to attitudes to immigration, but only among skilled and highly educated workers, and labor concern is the weakest economic determinant of attitudes.

With the arrival of the economic crisis, it is of course of interest to understand whether this has changed, and whether other, economic, concerns, start playing a role in determining positive or negative sentiment towards non-natives. Over the past two years, migration has received an increased attention from the media and policy-makers, and numerous reportages suggested an uprise in racism and xenophobia, coupled with discrimination among immigrant workers, especially as native-born individuals started perceiving competition in the labor markets.

Has there been a change of attitudes in reality? According to the latest round of the European opinion poll Eurobarometer, carried out in the early summer of 2009, only 4% of individuals in 27 European Union Member States and the three candidate countries named immigration as one of the two most important concerns they are facing at the moment, far below the number of individuals concerned with the economic situation, unemployment, health problems, pension system, taxation, crime, housing, or protecting the environment. Only 7% named immigration as one of the most important problems facing their country at the moment (with only two answer choices possible). Countries with highest percentage of individuals concerned about immigration are Malta, the UK, and Cyprus, while several countries, notably Eastern European, but also countries like Portugal, had expressed virtually no concern at all.

Figure 3. Proportion of Individuals Concerned by Immigration: June-July 2009



Source: Eurobarometer, Spring 2009

Table 5. Attitudes of Native-born vis-à-vis Immigration:

	Full Sample			**"Core" European**		
	2004-2005	2006-2007	2008-2009	2004-2005	2006-2007	2008-2009
Percent of individuals, who agree:						
- to allow more immigrants of the same race or ethnic group as majority	20.84	26.61	24.18	17.42	16.47	19.39
- to allow more immigrants of different race or ethnic group as majority	12.38	12.59	12.71	11.06	10.21	12.30
- to allow more immigrants from poorer countries outside Europe	11.65	11.94	12.11	10.50	10.48	11.83
- that immigrants are rather good than bad for the economy	60.60	61.44	63.81	61.64	65.01	67.24
- that country's cultural life is enriched by immigrants	68.26	64.51	67.38	70.63	70.73	73.59
- that immigrants make a country a better place to live	62.69	58.93	62.01	62.02	61.85	66.20
Number of respondents:	47,537	45,139	41,027	32,467	28,168	24,660

Source: Author's calculations based on the European Social Survey (see Jowell et al, various issues).
Notes: Countries of the "core European" sample include: Austria, Belgium, Switzerland, Denmark, Germany, Spain, Finland, France, Great Britain, Greece, Ireland, Iceland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Sweden. Data for Italy are not available. Countries of the full sample include: in addition to the "core European", also Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia, Cyprus, Ukraine, Russia, Turkey, Israel. Tabulations are done accounting for survey design and population weights.

In addition to this, Table 5 compares the responses to various attitudinal questions, asked to individuals throughout Europe over the past 5 years, in a framework of the representative European Social Survey. The last round of the survey has been held between September 2008 and May 2009, which means it covered the period of the economic crisis. In fact, this table shows that the opinions about immigrants, their impact on the countries of destination, and immigration policies, are rather stable over time. There are relatively few individuals who would want to admit more immigrants into their country, regardless of their ethnic and economic background, but at the same time, a great majority of native-born individuals recognizes a positive impact of immigrants on various aspects of life in their countries. If anything, one can even observe a slight increase in positive answers and a slight increase in the number of people who are rather favorable to immigrants.

The results of these two surveys, Eurobarometer and European Social Survey, at the first glance are rather surprising. In fact, they challenge a conventional view that has been highly mediatized and used by politicians that native-born individuals have witnessed an uprise in anti-immigration sentiment and that immigration is higher than ever on political agenda. Indeed, this is a very interesting observation, which evokes numerous questions. Do media and politicians miss completely the real sentiment among their citizens? Are spikes of xenophobic attitudes as occasional as before, but simply receive extra attention in times of the crisis? Are public opinions influenced by the media, coexist in parallel with the media, or go against the image that is imposed by the media? Does public become more sensible to immigration issues and more realistic about them than the media and politicians? If the latter is true, than in whose interest is it to distort the real public opinion?

7. Key Issues and Research Perspectives

With these questions in mind, and given the situation described above, several directions for research may be outlined:

1) First, it is of interest to test the empirical link between the attitudes towards immigrants and economic conditions in the countries of destination. This can be done by relating individual-level and/or cross-country level of opinions to the economic situation, especially unemployment. In a similar fashion, it is of interest to test the empirical link between the attitudes and media coverage of migration-related events: what are the cleavages? What is the degree of the correlation between the two, and is there causality between them? A comparative perspective of changing attitudes before and during the crisis can be adopted (depending on the duration of the project, we may operate with the new wave of the ESS data that will be available in 2011, with the data collection period covering 2009-2010).

2) Second, it is of interest to test an empirical link between irregular migration and certain characteristics of destination countries, such as:

   - migration policies
   - general labor market policies (such as the flexibility of the labor markets, trade union membership, the degree of informal sector),
   - in order to empirically confirm what is the strongest predictor of flows and stocks.

3) Third, in order to understand better how immigrants are faring during the crisis, as to also comprehend to what extent labor market fears of native-born individuals may be justified, we may look at individual coping strategies of immigrants. This may done within a framework of a comparative cross-country analysis based on country-data and/or labor force censuses from Italy, Spain, France, the UK. What is the role of individual migrant characteristics (is it the same in every country?) What is the role of policies? Are fears of labor market competition justified?

4) Finally, it may be of interest also to examine the effectiveness of existing migration control policies in destination and in transit migration countries. The current economic crisis has show that modern migration policies may facilitate the flows when they are needed, but not necessarily stop immigration when it is less desired from a political point of view. The lack of working opportunities, rather than the presence of anti-immigration policies has been the main reason for the drop in immigration during the crisis. Hence, can we say that current policies are effective? Or does migration happen despite policies? What implications does this have for migration policies in post-crisis

economies? Potentially, current crisis has also opened up new opportunities for reconsidering short-term versus long-term gains from immigration, and as such opened up possibilities for reforms. What kind of reforms do we want?

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